

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3874

INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

AMEMBASSY RABAT

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK

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EO 11652: NA

TAGS: MOPS PFOR AG MO MR SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA: POLISARIO DEVELOPMENTS

1. MILITARY ACTIVITY: POLISARIO HAS RECENTLY PUBLISHED TWO COMMUNIQUE CONCERNING CASUALTIES ALLEGEDLY INFLICTED ON MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS IN SAHARA. FIRST COMMUNIQUE PURPORTS TO COVER LAST TWO WEEKS OF CHAIN; SECOND DEALS WITH MORE RECENT FIGHTING.

2. JANUARY 16-31;

A. MOROCCAN FRONT; POLISARIO CLAIMS 286 MOROCCANS DEAD AND 194 WOUNDED. THREE FOUGA MAGISTERS AND THREE HELICOPTERS SAID TO HAVE BEEN DOWNED AND 61 VEHICLES, INCLUDING FIVE AMX AND THIRTEEN AMLS, DESTROYED. SOME ARMS AND MUNITIONS CAPTURED. OF MANY CLASHES DESCRIBED IN COMMUNIQUE, LARGE NUMBER SAID TO HAVE OCCURRED IN SOUTHERN MOROCCO, NOTABLY AT M'SEID, ZAG AND FOUM EL HASSAN BUT OTHER REPORTED IN JDIRIYA REGION, ON ROAD BETWEEN BOU CRAA AND EL AYOUN, AND AT CAP BOJADOR.

B. MAURITANIAN FRONT: 169 DEAD, 181 WOUNDED AND 15 VEHICLES DESTROYED. COMMUNIQUE SPEAKS OF HEAVY FIGHTING AT AIN BEN TILY

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AND FRON JAN 18-28, AT BIR MOGHREIN.

3. RECENT FIGHTING; SECOND POLISARIO COMMUNIQUE PUBLISHED FEB 18 DESCRIBES CLASHES AT HAWZA (FEB 12) , KHNEG ZREIFA (FEB 13) AND AMGALA (FEB 14)M AT HAWZA, WHERE POLISARIO CLAIMS TO HAVE SHOT DOWN ONE OF SQUADRON OF MOROCCAN "MIRAGES," MOROCCAN DEAD SAID TO HAVE NUMBERED 200. INCIDENT AT KHNEG ZREIFA IN WHICH GUERRILLAS SAID TO HAVE CLASHED WITH MOROCCAN FORCES SAID TO OCCUPY LA GUELTA, MORROCCAM LOSSES PUT AT 24 DEAD, 7 PRISONERS AND MANY WOUNDED. AT AMGALA, COMMUNIQUE SAYS MOROCCANS LOST

148 DEAD, 36 PRISONERS AND MANY WOUNDED.

4. NEW SECY GEN: POLISARIO HERE ECHOES LE MONDE REPORT THAT NAHFUD LAROUSSI HAS BECOME POLISARIO SECY GEN. FORMER SECY GEN EL OUALI WILL BE TAKING CHARGE OF POLISSARIO MILITARY OPERATIONS IN DESERT, ACCORDING TO SOURCES IN ALGIERS. EMBASSY BELIEVES LAROUSSI TO BE SAME MAN IDENTIFIED BY SPANISH JOURNALIST LAST FALL AS BEING PART OF "MILITARY WING" OF POLISARIO.

5. POLISARIO MESSAGE DELIVERED TO RYDBECK: OVER WEEKEND, ALGERIAN TELEVISION CARRIED INTERVIEW WITH MOHAMAD SADDAH OF POLISARIO WHO HAD RECENTLY COME TO ALGIERS FROM EL AYOUN AFTER DELIVERING MESSAGE TO UN EMISSARY RYDBECK. SADDAH, ACCORDING TO PRESS, USED "CLEVER SUBTERFUGE" TO GAIN ACCESS TO RYDBECK AND THEN SOUGHT RYDBECK'S PROTECTION FOR GAINING ASYLUM IN ALGERIA OR LIBYA. SPANISH AUTHORITIES IN EL AYOUN AIDED HIM IN DEPARTING FOR ALGIERS VIA MADRID, HE CLAIMED.

6. COMMENT: POLISARIO COMMUNIQUE CITED ABOVE MORE SPECIFIC IN TERMS OF TIME THAN RADIO ALGIERS REPORT (FBIS 160011Z FEB 76 NOTAL) THAT 1,000 MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS HAD BEEN KILLED IN FIGHTING. PARKER

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